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26 January 1984

DCI Talking Points: Situation in Chad

Four French fighter-bombers yesterday attacked a rebel column moving north with two Belgian prisoners taken during an assault on the village of Ziguey (zee-gee), located below the defensive line drawn by the French. One plane was downed by SAM fire from the column, and French aircraft inflicted some damage on the rebel force.

late yesterday that the French planned to use light attack helicopters this morning to support a mission to rescue the two Belgian prisoners. We have no confirmation that such a mission has taken place.

- o According to Embassy N'Djamena, bad dust conditions in northern Chad may have blocked the rescue operations.
- o The rebel column already may have escaped to Faya Largeau.

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Both France and Libya probably are reluctant to risk a direct clash and a wider conflict.

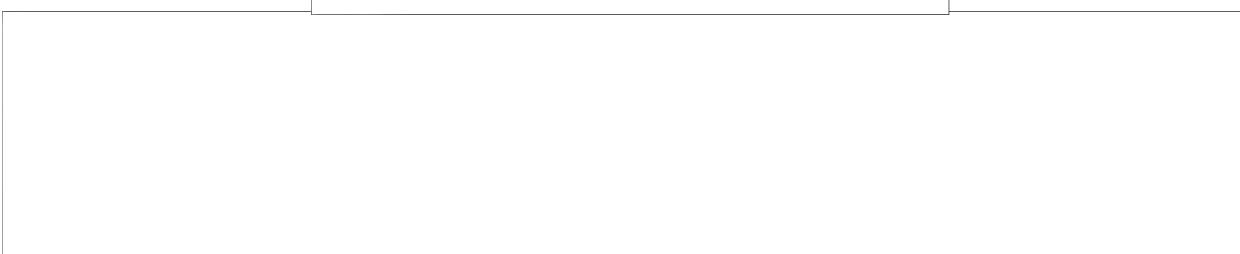
- o Paris has consistently favored measured responses to Libyan and rebel actions in Chad to keep open the possibility of a negotiated settlement.
- o The French have brought up sufficient fighter-bombers, troops and helicopters to support a retaliatory strike against the rebels.
- o The French may also consider providing Habre with enough additional supplies to permit limited offensive operations against the Libyans or rebels.

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